


# Preferences of sports tourism consumers

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** There are few studies about consumer preferences in sports tourism, especially in Peru. The objective of the study was to identify consumer preferences for sports tourism modalities and to analyse the characteristics of students who engage in this activity. It involved 260 student volunteers from a population of 343 students at the Faculty of Hotel Management and Tourism at the National University of Frontera, Sullana, Peru. An open and closed questionnaire was applied to the participants and frequency tests were used for data analysis. The result indicates that 30% of the students prefer mountaineering, 18.5% prefer volleyball, and 16.5% prefer soccer to other sports tourism modalities. 21.5% and 32.3% of students preferred to spend one and two days respectively in the sports destination. In addition, 44.6% of the students identified themselves as sport vacationers and 38.8% spent less or equal to S/. 100.00 soles when traveling to their tourist destination. The majority of participants used the internet and social networks to plan and share their travel experience. **Conclusions:** Students of tourism prefer mountaineering and do not identify themselves as passive or active sports tourists, but rather as sports vacationers.

**Keywords:** University students; Sport activity; Mountaineering; Social networks; Consumer behaviour.

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## INTRODUCTION

Sports tourism is the trip that the tourist makes with the motivation of moving away from his habitual residence to carry out a sport activity, participate in a sport event, or visit a museum or a sports stadium. Active sport tourism is characterized by the motivation of the tourist to carry out the sport activity and passive sport tourism is when the tourist is a spectator of the sport (Paniza-Prados et al., 2019). However, the sports vacationer refers to the tourist who develops sports activities or is a circumstantial spectator of a sports event when he travels to a tourist destination for vacation (Latiesa & Paniza, 2006).

In this sense, sports and recreational tourism are becoming more relevant, mainly in coastal areas with a higher seasonality. However, certain difficulties have become evident due to weak organization and a greater concentration of people in small towns (Hegeduš et al., 2017). In these locations, sports activities positively impact the environment in several ways. Sports activities impact urban development with better infrastructure, consolidate the community, promote socio-cultural exchange, improve the visibility and image of the community and offer knowledge and entertainment to the population and tourists; but sports activities also generate some negative impacts. Some negative impacts include economic costs, traffic on the roads, security, environmental concern and social conflicts (Njoroge et al., 2017).

In this regard, the sport that promotes a country and communicates a positive image increases the territory's popularity as a tourist destination. In this process, the role of the media in consumer preferences has been key (Mataruna-Dos-Santos, 2020). In addition, the creation of an umbrella brand that integrates the diversity of sports activities, workshops and interviews with sports organizers allows the introduction of nature as an important pillar in the preferences of sports tourists (Perić et al., 2017).

A recent study has shown that leisure and happiness are motivations for motorcyclists because they seek a healthy lifestyle, suggesting the segmentation of sports activities to attract tourists who attend shows or perform outdoor activities related to nature (Kruger & Venter, 2020).

From another perspective, sports events can become a mechanism for the development of tourist destinations through the consumption of products and services that use the resources and skills of several companies in a territory (Mackellar & Nisbet, 2017). One such case is the Tour de France which attracts nearly 11 million tourists along the roadside. This is a great example of an opportunity for local development dedicated to hospitality; it generates direct and indirect financial benefits (Varnajot, 2020).

For their part, schools have integrated sport and psychology into educational training, motivating the work of the trainer (Mikhaylova, 2018). In this regard, a study focused on children from 5 to 7 years old showed that those who perform exercises with medium and high intensity showed favorable physiological, psychological and behavioral changes (Krivolapchuk et al., 2020). In secondary education, the impact of sports practice on physical development, adaptation skills, physical fitness, and functional status has also been evaluated. It was observed that the functional capacity of the body is associated with the development of skills, strength and coordination, creating a healthier lifestyle for people (Parfenova et al., 2020).

The practice of sports and the development of communication skills have been positively correlated in young university students (Karakullukçu, 2020). In addition, it has been reported that the best grades earned by college students correlated with their involvement in sports practice. It showed that sports practice was positively correlated with improving critical thinking and interpersonal skills among students (Lukianets & Lukianets, 2020).

In this regard, it is not clear if university students prefer some form of sports tourism. Therefore, the objective of the study was to identify the consumer preferences of the modalities of sport tourism and to analyse the characteristics of the students who carry out this activity.

## METHODS

This is a descriptive study conducted at the National University of Frontera, Peru. The duration of the study was from September 2019 to August 2020. A questionnaire was applied with open and closed questions about the consumption preferences of sport tourism. The participants were 260 student volunteers from a population of 343 people from the School of Hotel Management and Tourism. All the students resided in the Piura region and the informed consent of the participants and the Declaration of Helsinki, as well as its subsequent revisions, were assessed throughout the research process. Frequency tests were carried out to analyse the variables and SPSS v20 software was used.

## RESULTS

Participants were 70% female and 30% male out of a total of 260/100% students. Most were between 18 and 25 years old and 93.8% were single. In addition, 41.5% had no monthly income and 40.4% had an income below or at the limit of the minimum wage, which in Peru amounts to S/. 930.00 a month; only 18.1% had an income above the minimum wage. this is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the students.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Man	78	30.0
Woman	182	70.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	3	1.2
Co-habitant	13	5.0
Single	244	93.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Monthly income</b>		
Greater than or equal to S/. 930.00	47	18.1
Less than S/. 930.00	105	40.4
No income	108	41.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100</b>

Regarding the sports tourism modalities, of the total number of students, 30% prefer mountaineering, 18.5% prefer volleyball and 16.5% prefer soccer to other sports tourism modalities. This is presented in Table 2.

29.2% of the students indicated that they normally used the internet to plan their vacation or sports activities and 35.8% reported that they always used the internet. 75% of the students indicated that they preferred to receive information about their tourist destination or sport activity through social networks and 15.8% preferred web pages as a means of information about their sport destination. In addition, 21.5% and 32.3% of students preferred to spend one and two days respectively when doing sports tourism as opposed to other days.

Table 2. Modalities of sports tourism referred by students.

Types of sports tourism	Frequency	%
None	2	0.8
Adventure / sun and beach	1	0.4
Athletics	2	0.8
Basketball	10	3.8
Surfing	10	3.8
Cycling	31	11.9
Swimming	35	13.5
Soccer	43	16.5
Volleyball	48	18.5
Mountaineering	78	30.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100</b>

Of the total number of students, 29.2% of women and 15.4% of men, respectively, identified themselves as sport tourists and 28.8% of women and 6.5% of men did not identify themselves as sport tourists, compared to other active or passive tourists. This result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Identification of students as sport or vacation tourists.

Type of sport tourist	Man	Woman	Total
I don't identify myself as a sports tourist	17 6.5%	75 28.8%	92 35.4%
I am an active sports tourist: Because I practice sports freely or attend organized competitions	12 4.6%	22 8.5%	34 13.1%
I am a passive sports tourist: Because I attend shows or sports events or visit sports museums or sports stadiums	9 3.5%	9 3.5%	18 6.9%
I am a sports vacationer: Because I move away from my usual residence for vacations and I take advantage to do a sport activity	40 15.4%	76 29.2%	116 44.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>78 30.0%</b>	<b>182 70.0%</b>	<b>260 100.0%</b>

With regard to student spending when they do sports tourism, 38.8% spend less or equal to S/. 100.00, 29.2% spend more than S/. 100.00 and up to S/. 300.00 compared to other students who do not do sports tourism. This result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Student spending when doing sports tourism.

I spend	Frequency	%
More than 600 soles	5	1.9
More than 100 soles to 300 soles	76	29.2
More than 300 soles to 600 soles	28	10.8
Less or equal to 100 Soles	101	38.8
I never do sport tourism	50	19.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100</b>

## DISCUSSION

There is little evidence to identify the quality of tourist service from the perspective of the sports consumer. According to (Szczechowicz, 2012); students prefer tourist packages that include sport activities except risky sports.

In our study we observed that mostly tourism students identified themselves as sport vacationers and the sport they preferred was mountaineering. According to (Eganov et al., 2020), female students prefer sports such as; gymnastics, hiking, athletics, aerobics, shaping, step aerobics, dance, skiing, judo, sambo and karate. These students are those who have better communication skills, better adaptation to certain stimuli and diverse social conditions, and are in better moods. In addition, sports give them the ability to control emotions and create their own opinion, increasing the desire to study and participate in work.

In this regard, sport tourism is one of the most accessible ways for students to develop their personality, self-determination, self-confidence and personal fulfilment by communicating and socializing with their peers and other social groups when they engage in sport (Neretina et al., 2016).

Our findings show that the majority of students are young people who prefer to receive information about their sports destination through social networks and websites, in addition; most young people used the internet to plan their vacations. This information coincides with (Jazdzewska & Jagnuszewska, 2017), who reported that the internet was indispensable for young people to organize a trip and share their vacation experience.

Another important aspect is the use of computer applications and technology to promote the tourist destinations of a country to the segment of young students, who are often mobilized at the stage of university education (Fadzil, N. A. S. N. M. et al., 2020). In this regard, it is important that tourism schools, associations and networks disseminate through their websites the trends in sports tourism to facilitate tourists in organizing their travel and sports activities and, on the other hand, allow companies to improve the supply of sports services (Hegazy, 2020).

Our study has limitations because it only focused on college students, who reside in one region and most of the participants were young people, especially women, between 18-25 years old. We did not collect information about the physical exercises that the participants did during their sports training and the dates that they usually do sports tourism. We also did not collect information from the participants about the sport activity in relation to their personality, self-determination and health situation.

In the region of Piura, there is little investment in sports infrastructure. The annual budget for the Institutional Operational Plan in the area of tourism is approximately S/.140,000.00 and this is a weakness that should be strengthened in order to promote tourism in Piura. In this regard, according to (Doroz-Turek, 2019), investment in sports infrastructure for students is often appropriate. However, in rural areas there is less investment in projects focused on students, which allows for a more dynamic environment, but with a poor infrastructure.

Passive tourism is considered to be the most popular, and may be due to lack of sports equipment, parental consent, and students' sports skills (Mei & Lantai, 2018). In our study we did not collect this information, but it is important to consider in future research related to sport tourism.

Sport is a holistic discipline that contributes to university education and health (Dopsaj et al., 2020) points out that sports complement the body balance of young people between 20 and 24 years of age, because he observed 6.85% of cases with low weight and 3.13% with obesity. In addition, a recent publication reported that people who practice sports and even under conditions of stress show a haematological and neuroimmune reserve (Pavlova et al., 2020). In that sense, the practice of sports is related to the well-being of the human being and generates more health benefits to tourists.

## CONCLUSIONS

University tourism students identify themselves as vacation sports tourists; most prefer mountaineering, volleyball and soccer to other forms of sports tourism. The use of the internet and social networks are indispensable for a young person to plan their trip. Future studies related to sports vacationers and the tourism infrastructure offered by the region are necessary.

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